CLAIMS:

1. A copy protection system, comprising:

a controller, operably coupled to a copy device, that is configured to maintain a log of prior copies of the source material, and to control the copy device dependent upon contents of the log, and

a marker device, operably coupled to the controller and the copy device, that is configured to attach an information item to one or more of the prior copies,

wherein

the information item includes an expiration time associated with each of the one or more of the prior copies, and

the log includes the expiration time associated with each of the one or more prior copies, and

the controller is configured to eliminate one or more effects of having made at least one copy of the one or more of the prior copies after an expiration of the expiration time associated with the at least one copy.

2. The copy protection system of claim 1, wherein

the log includes an identifier of the source material, and

the controller is configured to limit a total number of copies of the source material, based on the contents of the log.

3. The copy protection system of claim 1, wherein

the controller is further configured to:

erase a returned copy of the one or more prior copy, and

eliminate one or more effects of having made the returned copy.

4. The copy protection system of claim 3, wherein

the controller is configured to eliminate the one or more effects of having made the returned copy via a modification of the log corresponding to the returned copy.

5. The copy protection system of claim 4, wherein

the controller is configured to eliminate the one or more effects of having made the at least one copy after the expiration of the expiration time via a modification of the log corresponding to the at least one copy.

6. The copy protection system of claim 1, wherein

the controller is configured to eliminate the one or more effects of having made the at least one copy after the expiration of the expiration time via a modification of the log corresponding to the at least one copy.

7. The copy protection system of claim 1, further including

the copy device.

8. A method of controlling a creation of copies of source material, comprising:

maintaining a log of each copy of the source material, wherein the log includes an expiration time associated with at least one copy of the source material,

creating a new copy of the source material only if the log indicates that a total number of outstanding copies of the source material is below a given limit,

updating the log after the expiration time of the at least one copy has expired, so that the at least one copy is not included in the total number of outstanding copies of the source material after the expiration time of the at least one copy has expired.

9. The method of claim 8, further including

updating the log when an identified copy of the source is returned, so that the identified copy is not included in the total number of outstanding copies of the source material after the identified copy is returned.

10. The method of claim 9, further including

using a secure method of identifying the identified copy of the source.